
**DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
MAINE PUBLIC ASSISTANCE MANUAL
Alternative Aid Assistance Program**

The Department exercised its option to discontinue its Welfare-to-Work waiver demonstration project beginning 9/1/97 with the following exception:

- * The Department retains its Transitional Child Care waiver until 11/1/97.
- * The Department retains its waiver from the Federal Department of Human Services, Health Care Financing Administration which allows TANF or PaS recipients to receive Transitional Medicaid when they successfully obtain employment through ASPIRE-TANF job search activities within the first three months of TANF or PaS eligibility.

The remainder of the waiver initiatives become statewide policy 9/1/97. Policy for all the initiatives is incorporated throughout the manual except the Alternative Aid Assistance Program which remains in Chapter IX.

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Cross Reference LEGAL BASIS: The 117th Legislature authorized the Department to establish this program

None GENERAL RULE: The Alternative Aid voucher payment is assistance to applicants who seek short-term help to obtain or retain employment. The intent of the program is to help families remain self-supporting by providing voucher payments worth up to three months of the TANF benefits for which they are eligible. The expectation is that by providing a larger amount of benefits in a shorter time period, the family will be able to obtain or retain a job and will not become dependent on the TANF program.

PARTICIPANTS: Applicants statewide may volunteer to receive Alternative Aid. Alternative Aid is not available to families who are currently receiving TANF.

PAYMENT: The Department will pay vendor payment(s) for the application month and the two subsequent months for which the family is eligible. The benefits will be authorized within 30 days of application. No cash benefit is paid to the family. Vendor payments are authorized after the expense has been confirmed.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS: The rules that govern the TANF payment, including the asset limit, income limit and the budgeting process, will apply to Alternative Aid assistance with the following exceptions:

- a.) Child support payments received minus the first \$50, will be counted as unearned income in determining eligibility for and the amount of the Alternative Aid benefit. (See item d.)
- b.) The Alternative Aid benefit is issued only once in the life time of the parents or caretaker relatives in the assistance unit.
- c.) The caretaker relative or parent must be employed or looking for work.
- d.) The family is not required to assign child support, comply with ASPIRE-TANF requirements, or participate in a TANF orientation meeting.

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- e. Receipt of Alternative Aid Assistance does not count towards the 60 month time limit.
- f. When the family's income passes the pretests, the wages which would count in the grant calculation of TANF or PaS benefits are excluded income in the grant calculation of Alternative Aid Assistance.

Families who receive Alternative Aid will be reviewed for Medicaid eligibility. However, periods of receipt of Alternative Aid will not constitute receipt of TANF benefits for purposes of eligibility for Transitional Medicaid, Transitional Child Care, or Transitional Transportation.

If during the 3 month eligibility period in which a family is receiving the Alternative Aid benefit the family applies for and is determined eligible for TANF or PaS, the family must repay any Alternative Aid received for any period which was covered by both Alternative Aid and TANF. The repayment method will be the same as that used for the repayment of unintentional overpayments in the TANF program.

INFORMING TANF APPLICANTS: Eligibility staff must explain Alternative Aid to all TANF applicants. Families may apply for Alternative Aid if they think the program will help them retain or obtain employment.

A family may apply for Alternative Aid instead of TANF by completing an application and consent form agreeing to comply with the terms of Alternative Aid.